

Serial No. 10/606,257

REMARKS

Consideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested. By the present amendment, the specification has been amended to claim priority from U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/804,918, filed March 13, 2002, which issued as U.S. Patent No. US 6,736,421 B1 on May 18, 2004. Also, by the present amendment claims 1, 6, and 8 are amended and new claim 19 has been added. Claims 1-19 are pending in the application.

Claims 1, 6, and 8 have been amended to overcome the objections cited in item 2 of the Office Action.

Regarding the objection to the specification cited in item 1 of the Office Action and the rejection of claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, cited in item 4 of the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that the term "dentation" has a defined meaning that appropriately describes element 174 of Fig. 7. According to The American Heritage Collegiate Dictionary, Third Edition, the word "dentation" is defined as "a toothlike part or projection." Examiner's attention is further called to the parent of the present application, US 6,736,421 B1, which includes the same language. It is respectfully submitted that the objection and rejection should be withdrawn.

New claim 19 is claim 4 rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claim 1. Therefore, claim 19 should be allowed, as indicated in item 6 of the Office Action.

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Claim 1 recites a support device that clamps onto a fill tube to connect the fill tube and an inflatable curtain to the support device. A grab handle is extendable through the headliner and into the support device to connect the grab handle and headliner to the support device. This forms a module including the headliner, grab handle, support device, fill tube, and inflatable curtain. Claim 1 further recites a first connector for initially connecting the module to the vehicle and a second connector extendable through the grab handle and the support device to fixedly connect the module to the vehicle. This structure is not taught or suggested in the references cited in the Office Action.

Neither Wong et al. (US 2002/0125705 A1) nor Rickabus (US 5,931,525) disclose a support device that clamps onto a fill tube to connect the fill tube and inflatable curtain to the support device. Rickabus does not disclose any vehicle occupant protection devices or fill tubes whatsoever. In Wong et al., it is not clear at all what relation, if any, the envelope 146 has to the fill tube 26. In Wong et al., one cannot even tell if the fill tube extends into any portion of the envelope. As shown in Fig. 1, the fill tube interfaces with the inflatable curtain at the rear of the curtain. Looking at Fig. 2, however, which is sectioned near the rear of the curtain, there is no sign of the fill tube having any portion located in the envelope 146. In fact, none of the cross-sectional views in Wong et al. show the fill tube.

Also, as shown in Figs. 4, 7, and 8, the inflatable curtain appears to be stored in a relatively loosely folded

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manner in the envelope, i.e., there appears to be substantial free space for movement within the envelope. Thus, even if the fill tube had a portion disposed in the envelope, the envelope certainly would not clamp onto the tube. Furthermore, the envelope, as described at paragraph [0090], is constructed of a flexible material and the only material given as an example is a such as a fabric. Certainly, one has to stretch the imagination to come up with a construction of the envelope, using a material with the flexibility of a fabric, that could effectively clamp onto the fill tube.

For the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that Wong et al. and Rickabus, alone or in combination, do not disclose all of the features recited in claim 1. Contrary to that which is set forth in item 5 of the Office Action, Wong et al. does not disclose a support device that clamps onto a fill tube to connect the fill tube and an inflatable curtain to the support device. Therefore, claim 1 should be allowed. Claims 2-15 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable as depending from an allowable claim and for the specific features recited therein.

Claims 16 and 17 also recite a support device that has a portion that clamps around a fill tube. As set forth above in regard to claim 1, Wong et al. and Rickabus do not teach or suggest this structure. Therefore, claims 16 and 17 should also be allowed.

Claim 18 recites an apparatus including a headliner, an inflatable side curtain, and a grab handle assembled together as a module. The apparatus also includes a push-in connector

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for initially connecting the module to the vehicle. The apparatus further includes a threaded connector extendable through the grab handle to fixedly connect the module to the vehicle. The threaded connector and grab handle are removable to release the headliner from the vehicle. The push-in connector maintains the side curtain connected to the vehicle while the headliner and grab handle are removed. This structure is not taught or suggested in Wong et al. or Rickabus. In Wong et al., there is no grab handle and second connector that are removable to release the headliner while leaving the inflatable curtain installed via the push-in fasteners. As clearly stated in Wong et al., the headliner is installed after the module 50 is installed in the vehicle (see paragraphs [0073], [0098], and [0112]). The push-in and threaded connectors in Wong et al. do not connect the headliner to the vehicle and thus are not removable to release the headliner. In Rickabus, there is no inflatable curtain and, if the threaded fastener is removed, the entire headliner assembly is disconnected from the vehicle and no part of the module remains connected to the vehicle. Therefore, claim 18 should also be allowed.

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In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above identified application is in condition for allowance, and allowance of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,



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